

Museum Organizes First-Ever Exhibition of Art by Coast Salish First Peoples

S'abadeb – The Gifts: Pacific Coast Salish Art and Artists

Oct. 24, 2008 – Jan. 11, 2009

SEATTLE, Oct. 9, 2008 – The first major exhibition to explore the unique artistry and culture of Coast Salish First Peoples of Washington State and British Columbia, *S'abadeb – The Gifts: Pacific Coast Salish Art and Artists*, is on view at the Seattle Art Museum Oct. 24, 2008, through Jan. 11, 2009.

The exhibition, which was organized by the Seattle Art Museum, features more than 175 works of art from dozens of national and international collections—including 19th-century house posts, tools and eating utensils; 100-year-old spindle whorls; goat-horn jewelry; and woven blankets and clothing—that offer a glimpse into the daily and ceremonial lives of the 40 groups that make up the Coast Salish.

Curated by Barbara Brotherton, SAM curator of Native American Art, the exhibition presents many artworks that have never been on public view. In an extensive, two-year process, Salish First Nations consultants, museum staff and various humanities experts honed the themes, content and the presentation of these artworks. Native advisers and contemporary Salish artists provided unique perspectives on the meanings of the artworks and how those meanings have survived or been transformed over time.

The result, *S'abadeb–The Gifts: Pacific Coast Salish Art and Artists*, reveals the beauty and power of Coast Salish art and explores the concepts of property, status, trade, ancestors and family within Salish communities. Prehistoric, historic and contemporary works shown side-by-side emphasize the cultural exchanges that began in the late 18th century and the ongoing vitality of Salish art traditions. Dynamic multimedia presentations featured in the galleries bring the art to life, taking visitors into the territories and lives of Salish peoples.

The exhibition title, *S'abadeb*, is the Lushootseed term for “gifts” and invokes a principle at the heart of Salish culture: reciprocal gift-giving. A richly symbolic concept, *s'abadeb* expresses the sustained acts of giving of one's time, resources and expertise during the course of everyday activities, during preparations and enactments of ceremonies, and within the private realm of religious rituals.



Thunderbird Saves Wolf, 2006, Andrea Wilbur-Sigo, Squaxin, red cedar, yellow cedar, paint, 18 x 18 x 22 in., Glenn and Ann Parker, © Andrea Wilbur-Sigo, Image courtesy of Andrea Wilbur-Sigo Photo by Wayne Kritsberg

S'abadeb – The Gifts: Pacific Coast Salish Art and Artists is supported by a \$400,000 National Endowment for the Humanities Implementation Grant, Bruce Cole, chairman of the NEH, announced at a public event at the Seattle Art Museum in mid-August. Because of the NEH grant, visitors will not pay a surcharge (often \$20) to see the exhibition, although normal museum admission charges will apply (\$13 adults, \$10 seniors and \$7 teens and students).

Further evidence of the exhibition's importance is witnessed by a proclamation issued by Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels, naming the exhibition's opening day, Oct. 24, 2008, "Coast Salish Culture Day." In his proclamation, Mayor Nickels states: "I herby urge citizens to join me in celebrating the Seattle Art Museum's first major exhibition that explores the unique artistry of the Coast Salish First People."

Following its presentation in Seattle, *S'abadeb* travels to the Royal British Columbia Museum, Victoria, BC (Nov. 20, 2009–March 8, 2010). The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated, 300-page catalog published by the University of Washington Press, a leader in Native art books. The catalog reflects the most current issues and methodologies from a variety of perspectives and diverse voices and fills a noticeable gap in the explication of Salish art and aesthetics. Lavishly illustrated and researched, the catalogue is a pivotal book on Coast Salish art and will serve as a lasting reference for scholars and teachers, as well as for broader audiences.

###

This exhibition is organized by the Seattle Art Museum and made possible by a generous leadership grant from The Henry Luce Foundation and Presenting Sponsors the National Endowment for the Humanities and The Boeing Company. This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts with major support provided by the Mayor's Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs, Adobe Systems, Incorporated, PONCHO, Washington State Arts Commission, and U.S. Bancorp Foundation. Additional support provided by the Native Arts of the Americas and Oceania Council at the Seattle Art Museum, Thaw Charitable Trust, Charlie and Gayle Pancerczewski, Suquamish Clearwater Casino Resort, Humanities Washington, Kreielsheimer Exhibition Endowment and Contributors to the Annual Fund.

###

For 75 years, the Seattle Art Museum (SAM) has been a leading visual arts institution in the Pacific Northwest. SAM is a world-renowned arts institution with three locations, the Seattle Art Museum, downtown, Seattle Asian Art Museum (SAAM) in Volunteer Park and the Olympic Sculpture Park (OSP) in Belltown. SAM is an institution with a global perspective, collecting and exhibiting objects from 140 cultures and exploring the connections between past and present. With approximately 25,000 objects, SAM's collections are unmatched in the region.

-30-



NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

